



Annual Council Staff Report 2011

Council Staff

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Introduction

City Council Staff prepared this report to provide an overview of the activities of both Council Staff and City Council for 2011. This report provides some detail on the number of complaints fielded during 2011 with the resolution rate, along with highlights of the legislation adopted, and updates on the issues addressed by the, City Council, Council Staff and the Boards, Authorities and Commissions served by Council Staff.

City Council Accomplishments

City Council, as set forth in the City of Reading Home Rule Charter, serves as the Governing Body of the City of Reading. As such, all powers of the City not otherwise provided for by the Home Rule Charter are exercised in a manner determined by City Council.

In 2011, City Council addressed a wide range of issues that directly affected the lives of citizens. **Key accomplishments** include:

City Council adopted resolutions to **reappoint and appoint approximately 61 Board, Authority and Commission members, along with a new Zoning Administrator.**

Council did not need to **remove any members** for non-attendance at meetings during 2011.

City Council assisted the Administration by **adjusting program fees** to enable the City to cover its costs to provide various programs, such as Fire and Police Department Standby Fees. Council also enacted legislation to reduce the annual rental permit fee to \$100 per property per year vs. \$100 per unit per year. The \$100 per unit fee allowed the City to capture the cost of rental inspections performed every three (3) to five (5) years. This adjustment was requested by Reading investors who objected to prepaying for the inspection. In reality adjustments to these fees were revenue neutral to the majority of

investors.

City Council also supported the Administration's desire to expand the Quality of Life **Ticketing program**. Prior to the quality of life ticketing program Property Maintenance Inspectors were required to post notices for complaints like high grass and weeds, animal excrement, snow removal, etc. The PMIs were then required to go back to the property five (5) days later to check for compliance. The majority of time property owners would refuse to comply and the citation process would begin. This process was found to be ineffective and expensive and served as a reminder system for basic quality of life issues. QoL tickets are scaled \$25 for the first ticket, \$50 for the second ticket and \$100 for the third ticket. The Property Maintenance Division reported monthly on the quality of life program used to address individual complaints and sweeps covering the entire city over 2011. At the end of 2011, 15,971 QoL Tickets were issued and \$296,710 was paid. At the end of 2011 548 appeals were heard and 191 were granted. Analysis of this data shows that 69% of the tickets were issued to rental properties.

City Council empanelled the **Redistricting Committee** to review the 2010 Census results and to make recommendations for the realignment of the Council District boundaries. The Redistricting Committee received technical assistance from the County Planning Department and administrative support from the Legislative Aide Committee. Through this assistance the Redistricting Committee was able to draft an effective and well prepared recommendation, which was presented to Council at the December Work Session. A public hearing is scheduled for January 2012.

City Council also continues to participate in meetings with the **Albright** Administration, Reading Police Department and District 4 representatives concerning **off-campus student housing problems**. Communication between the parties is coordinated by the Council office, resulting in a significant decrease in complaints from residents in the Albright neighborhood. Council also learned that only one (1) rental property in District 4 had registered their non-conforming pre-existing student housing use. The Zoning Ordinance now prohibits new Student Rental properties in the R1 and R2 low-density zoning districts.

Council adopted **73 Ordinances** and **187 Resolutions** in 2011. By the end of 2011 seven (7) Resolutions and four (4) Ordinances were withdrawn; one (1) Ordinances before Council was NOT enacted. Staff, in cooperation with the Solicitor's Office and other departments, provided research and support for the preparation of this legislation. Every effort was made to ensure the final product was of the highest legal and technical quality. The original copies of legislation are indexed, bound and stored in the vault for

research and historical purposes.

In addition to Regular Meetings, Work Sessions and Committee meetings, Council conducted one (1) **Tax Exoneration hearing** and seven (7) **Public hearings** – of which three (3) dealt with matters concerning amendments to the zoning ordinance and two (2) were Charter required budget hearings. Council also held two (2) **special meetings** regarding the 2011 budget.

In addition, six (6) **Conditional Use hearings** were held concerning the following properties:

- 132 W Oley St – approving a group home with conditions
- 143 S 12th St – denying two units and ordering the deconversion to one unit
- 334 McKnight St – denying two units and ordering the deconversion to one unit
- 1207 N 10th St – applicant did not attend the hearing or request a change in the hearing date, thus the permit was denied by the Law Office due to the property owner's failure to attend the hearing or request a new hearing date.
- 1457 N 9th St – denying three units but approving two units with conditions and ordered the removal of one kitchen
- 1051 Chestnut St – approving two units with conditions

Also, one (1) **HARB appeal hearing** was held concerning a window replacement project at 118 S 5th St. This issue was remanded to HARB for further review and consideration.

City Council intervened in several decisions of the Zoning Hearing Board to the Court of Common Pleas that were appealed by **Orange Stones/Fire Tree**. During 2011, with assistance from the Law Office, Barley Snyder LLC (outside legal counsel for the City), and Hartman/Shur (legal counsel for the College Heights Community Council) all zoning related cases were merged into a single case. Favorable decisions were obtained from the Berks County Court of Common Pleas and the Commonwealth Court. The Mandamus action, which sought an immediate zoning permit from the Zoning Administrator, filed by Orange Stones/Fire Tree was denied by the Commonwealth Court. This decision provides language that will further assist in this legal battle, as it states that the proposed reuse of the property is not a non-conforming, pre-existing use. The City also received assistance from Masano Bradly LLC and the Law Office in the tax exemption appeal of Orange Stones/Fire Tree, which was denied by the Berks County Court of Common Pleas.

Council Staff Key Accomplishments

1. Staff was responsible for providing administrative support to the following City agencies. These organizations play a vital role assisting City Council and the Administration in advancing their respective positions. These organizations promote citizen involvement in government and advance the concept of participatory democracy.

- a) **Blighted Property Review Committee** – During the beginning of 2010 the BRPC received minimal support from the Administration. However, the new the Law Office helped to correct that problem. The City Clerk developed a hearing schedule that will allow the BRPC to process approximately 100 properties per year and refined the target process by going after all properties owned that meet the blight criteria, rather than addressing each blighted property individually. The hearing documentation process was also improved by having various departments complete affidavits which eliminates the need for department representatives to attend and testify at the hearings. A summary sheet was also developed by the City Clerk which provides the City attorney with a single sheet listing all the criteria that needs to go on the record for each property as it is processed. The use of affidavits and summary sheets has reduced the hearing time down to approximately one (1) hour for 13 properties, which is a drastic improvement from the hearings in 2009 when processing 10 properties took approximately 4 ½ hours. During 2011, the City Clerk worked with the Law Office and Property Maintenance Manager to shift blighted property support from the CD office to the Property Maintenance Office and create an automated support process using the Hansen program. The City Clerk and Law Office also began meeting with other City offices and the County Treasurer to begin using the Act 90 tools provided by the State Legislation, effective in April 2011. The BRPC Process in Reading gained attention from the Pa. Housing Alliance and the City Clerk was invited to the eastern PA conference in November to speak about the refined hearing process. With over 80 properties certified as blighted, the BRPC, with assistance from the City Clerk and Law Office also began quarterly meetings with the City's Housing Partners (NHS, Our City Reading and Habitat for Humanity) to start the eminent domain process, rehab for certified properties and develop a strong housing strategy to address the City's Housing Stock. The City Clerk, Law Office and Solicitor for the Redevelopment Authority now meet monthly to discuss the disposition of all certified properties, select the best means to gain title to the certified properties, and then move the process forward.

b) **Board of Health** – The Board of Health met eight times in 2011 to focus on the following topics:

- Lead Contamination and Remediation of Bernhart's Park – The Board discussed remediation efforts that were taking place at the park and the progress throughout the year.
- Tattoo Parlor Legislation – The Board discussed the need for this legislation and whether it should require a license or permit for this type of business. Draft legislation was created and is currently being reviewed by the Law Department.
- Bedbug Legislation – The Board discussed the increased occurrence of bedbug infestations in the City and the suggestion by the City Health Officer for clarification of the current ordinance regarding abatement. The Board continues to discuss the actual need and legalities associated with designating and enforcing responsibility on the landlord and/or tenant.

The Board will continue to monitor health issues affecting the City and its residents.

c) **Board of Ethics** – The Board of Ethics met four times during 2011 to continue their work to integrate the City's Integrity in Government provisions into the Code of Ethics and to process two complaints. One complaint dealt with a conflict of interest, the other with the use of City property and political activity.

d) **Environmental Advisory Council** – The EAC continues their work on a bi-monthly BCTV program, "Our City Our World," to educate citizens about the environment. During 2011 topics of the programs included "Kids Making a Difference" featuring several active Eco Clubs in Reading Schools, Earth Day, solving water pollution issues presented by the Conservation District, climate change and "Occupy Everything" showcasing how the occupy movement is having environmental impacts.

The EAC participates in the Conservancy EAC Networking programs.

During 2011, the EAC worked on the Bernhart Park remediation plan.

Environmental issues reviewed throughout the year included:

- Recycling by the Reading School District

- Organizing RSD Environmental Clubs for networking purposes
- Earth Day
- Regulations for rain barrels
- Smart Growth Alliance
- Stormwater Issues
- Steep Slope Ordinance
- Riparian Buffer Ordinance
- Floodplain Ordinance
- Grants available for possible projects

Looking forward to 2012, the Deputy City Clerk will be working with other City staff on environmental ordinances addressing riparian buffers, steep slopes, flood plains, and light pollution.

- e) **Park and Recreation Advisory Committee** – The PARC continued its work to update the City’s 10 Year Park and Open Space Plan during 2011. The questionnaires that were distributed to City youth through the Reading School District were reviewed and the results compiled. The survey results will be used to update the Park and Open Space Plan. The Park and Open Space Plan will be a chapter of the City’s 2012 update to the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the Chair of the PARC was instrumental in beginning the study of the Recreation Commission. The Recreation Commission has been successfully created and has started its work. The future of the PARC is being studied for its continued service to the City.

- f) **Reading Local Redevelopment Authority** - In late 2010 the CEO of TRHMC resigned and a new interim CEO was named, TRHMC became hesitant about the proposed project at the **Navy Marine Center**, decommissioned by the federal government in 2005, and refused to submit the required application with the Federal Department of Health and Human Services, which is required for a no cost transfer. After months of discussions, TRHMC sent a letter informing the LRA that they did not want to move forward with the proposed project. In 2011 Mary’s Shelter amended their original request for a one (1) acre parcel along Pershing Blvd and requested ownership of the main “L” shaped facility along Kenhorst Blvd. The LRA approved this request as the change will provide Mary’s Shelter with the ability to expand their client care without building or moving into new facilities. In discussions with Mary’s Shelter the LRA explored partnerships with several other organizations such as Alvernia and Berks Catholic; however, the HUD

requirements for the complete rehab and reuse of the property within a short period of time became an obstacle that caused both organizations to back away. The LRA then began meeting with the Redevelopment Authority to discuss their potential purchase of the remaining 6.06 acres. In meetings with the surrounding community the LRA heard their desire to make the remaining 6.06 acres some type of ratable residential use. The Redevelopment Authority supports this concept and will make an offer to purchase the remaining 6.06 acres for some type of residential and taxable reuse. The subdivision of the property created the need for a survey to set boundary lines. With the assistance and approval of the Managing Director and the City Planner, the City Clerk was able to secure the services of a surveyor to perform this function. After the Navy sets the fair market value of the remaining 6.06 acres, the Redevelopment Authority will make an offer to purchase this property. The Redevelopment Authority is currently exploring residential reuse options with developers. In the first six (6) months of 2012, after Mary's Shelter receives a zoning permit for the reuse of the main facility, City Council and the LRA will need to approve an amendment to the Reuse Plan for submission to the Navy, OEA and HUD. The LRA will also need to approve an amendment to the Legally Binding Agreement with Mary's Shelter.

- g) **Bernhart's Park** – In early 2011, the EPA and Exide agreed to remediate Bernhart's Park and a rehab plan for the Park was negotiated by the City Clerk, Environmental Attorney David Beane, from the EAC, Dr. Kimball, from the Board of Health, who is an expert in health issues caused by lead exposure, and the City's Utilities Division Manager Deb Hoag. Exide's work to remediate and rehabilitate the Park to the City's specifications began in late spring 2011. By the end of 2011 only a few punch list items remain to be completed. The Park has been fully restored for passive recreational reuse and is already heavily used by the surrounding residential property owners. A grand reopening is slated for late May early June 2012.

2. In early 2011, the **Reading Berks Association of Realtors (R-BAR)** introduced the **CORE (Community Reinvestment)** program to the City. CORE focuses on turning vacant blighted properties into owner occupied properties. The BPRC and City Clerk saw an opportunity to begin the CORE in the outlying low-density residential areas, due to the dramatic increase in foreclosed properties sitting vacant and in disrepair and shepherded this program forward. The CORE ordinance was approved by Council at the October 24 Regular Meeting and the CORE agreement was drafted by the Managing

Director, Legal Specialist Tonya Butler, Esquire and the City Clerk. The CORE Agreement requires all properties to become owner occupied and offers incentives such as a 4% reduction in the City's transfer tax, a reduction in the Trades/Building permits, and ReTAP for property improvements. The BPRC will put CORE bound properties into the blighted property process in early 2012. The City Clerk and Legal Specialist continue to participate in R-BAR's CORE meetings with realtors. R-BAR requires realtors to complete a CORE training program. The City's CORE Committee, composed of the City Clerk, Legal Specialist and Property Maintenance Manager will select CORE designated realtors to market CORE properties after the Redevelopment Authority takes title. As CDBG HOME funds cannot be used to take title to properties that do not meet HUDs low to moderate income regulations, the Managing Director has allocated \$100K to start this program. The success of the CORE program will provide a funding stream for the Redevelopment Authority to expand its ability to assist in the rehab and demolition of properties on a city-wide basis. The CORE Pilot program is slated to begin within the first six (6) months of 2012. The Legal Specialist and City Clerk have worked closely with the Redevelopment Authority's Solicitor to develop a strategy to take title to properties slated for CORE.

3. In late 2010 the City Clerk and Deputy City Clerk began to work with Eric Weiss and John Kromer, the City's housing consultants to develop the **Certificate of Transfer** program. This work continued through 2011. The team composed of the City Clerk, Deputy City Clerk, the housing consultants, the Property Improvement Manager, and Legal Specialist Butler worked together with R-BAR, the Recorder of Deeds and other parties to develop a sound Certificate of Transfer program. The Certificate of Transfer program was developed as an improvement to the Act 47 requirement to recreate the Pre-Settlement Inspection of residential properties. In their early meetings this team identified the need to find a mechanism to catch properties that did not comply with the pre-settlement requirement. As all properties that transfer are recorded at the Recorder of Deeds Office, the group created a process that will quickly identify properties that do not comply with the pre-settlement requirements: all deeds going to the Recorder's office must have the City's certificate of transfer attached. Properties that do not have the certificate attached will be flagged and transferred to the Property Maintenance Division, who will contact the new owner and provide follow through. The team decided to expand the pre-settlement process to all properties, residential, mixed use and commercial. Additional Property Maintenance personnel were hired in early 2012 to support this program which is slated to begin in April 2012. The team is currently working with R-BAR to begin a pilot program in March 2012 to test the program with six (6) properties (2 residential, 2 rental and 2 commercial/mixed use properties) that are currently listed for sale by realtors.

4. The City Clerk worked with the in-house team and out-side legal counsel to refine the **Housing Permit Ordinance** and develop a plan to address the zoning back log of approximately 1500 properties with incomplete zoning applications. The new housing permit process will require inspection of rental properties on a 3-5 year schedule. The previous rental ordinance provided annual rental registration and a rental permit only after a property was inspected. The new version eliminates the annual registration and created an annual rental permit which requires the owner to state on the application that his rental property complies with the City's property maintenance requirements. The group discussed creating a process to handle the 1500 rental properties stuck in the zoning backlog. Some of these properties have been in the backlog for almost four (4) years. Under the MPC and zoning regulations an independent hearing officer can be used conduct conditional use hearings. Individual City Councilors can also conduct conditional use hearings. Using the information provided by the Business Analyst, the City Clerk recommended the following plan to process these backlog properties:

- Independent Hearing Officer will conduct hearings for all rental properties with 1-3 rental units in high-density residential zones. An RFP for an attorney and transcription services will be used to staff this process. The Hearing Officer will, after holding the hearings, prepare a recommendation to approve or deny the applications with findings of fact and conclusions of law, which will be approved or denied by City Council at a regular business meeting.
- Individual Councilors will conduct hearings for rental properties with 4-6 rental units in their Council Districts. Council Staff and the Law Office will provide support and will draft recommendations to approve or deny the applications with findings of fact and conclusions of law which will be approved or denied by City Council at a regular business meeting.
- The body of Council will conduct hearings for rental properties with 7 units and more and all rental properties in R1 and R2 low density zoning districts. Council Staff and the Law Office will provide support and will draft recommendations to approve or deny the applications with findings of fact and conclusions of law which will be approved or denied by City Council at a regular business meeting.

To guard against too many applications coming in at one time, the process will be phased with assistance from the Business Analyst and the Zoning Administrator.

5. During 2011 a strong partnership was developed between the Council Office and **R-BAR Director of Governmental Affairs**. Through this partnership the R-BAR Board of Directors and the Governmental Affairs Director worked with the City Clerk to develop positive relationships with various City Departments, become informed and provide

input on various City initiated programs like the Quality of Life ticketing program, the Certificate of Transfer program and other housing related ordinances. Through this partnership R-BAR realtors have been able to become educated about various City initiatives and take that information to the clients they work with. The R-BAR office also provided assistance in correcting real estate listings in TREND that improperly advertise single family homes as rental properties. The R-BAR Director of Governmental Affairs initiated this partnership and should be recognized and congratulated for his work to educate realtors about City regulations.

6. Council Staff participated on the **HPO Continuous Improvement Team** (Housing Permit & Zoning Process & Financial Reporting), Chamber Governmental Affairs Committee, Municipal Secretaries Forum, Zoning Amendment Committee, Six Sigma Greenbelt Teams, Pandemic (Continuation of Government Operations) Committee and the City's Housing Strategy, Recreation Commission, Bernhart Park Work Group, and Act 47 Implementation meetings.

- a) The **Continuation of Government Operations Committee** defines the City's ability to respond to and be trained for disaster and ensures the functions of government are not halted during times of crisis. All Council Staff members have completed all FEMA and NIMS training courses and passed the related tests.
- b) Council Staff also participated actively on the **Zoning Amendment Committee** to re-write the City's Zoning Ordinance and provided research that supported various Council objectives and goals such as providing stronger restriction on Student Rental Housing in the City's low density residential zones, improve restrictions on "in-home" occupations, restrict the conversion of currently existing single family dwellings to multi-family rentals, place regulation on lighted billboards and electronic signage, improve regulations on in-home daycare centers, etc.
- c) Council Staff has also provided support to the City's new **Business Analyst** as he works to audit many of the City's program and operational areas. The various skill sets of our former Albright intern helped the Business Analyst achieve quick results as he worked on the broken housing permit process.
- d) Council Staff will continue working on Continuous Improvement Teams:
 - Beginning in early 2012 the Deputy City Clerk will be leading a team

concerning the increase in the fees for grocery inspections and deli inspections

7. Council Staff identified and corrected disconnects with the receipt and review of tax assessment, assessment appeal and exoneration applications and PLCB liquor license applications.

8. Through our continued work to identify illegal rental properties, Council Staff discovered rental properties that were improperly approved for the Homestead property tax rebate program. Council staff, with assistance from State Rep Dante Santoni, worked with Reading School District Solicitor and the County Assessment Office to correct the improper issuance of Homestead property tax rebates to rental properties.

Council staff has been provided with access to Hansen. Using Hansen and the Berks County Assessment Office Parcel Search, Parcel Maps the online Polk Directory and the Department of State website, Council staff has helped the Administration identify a multitude of illegal rentals and boarding houses, along with properties operating without proper business licenses and zoning permits. As of December 31, Council staff has identified approximately 11,540 properties that appear to be illegal rentals (properties lacking a zoning permit, lacking a housing permit, and/or lacking a business license) since February 2008. Property Maintenance uses this information to bring properties into compliance with the City's housing regulations.

Searches are done based on complaints received or by researching all properties on a street. Blocks in which crime incidents occurred or those accused of crimes resided are also researched. The weekly property transactions, weekly codes court cases and tax assessment appeals are also utilized as sources for searches. Council staff has, with the assistance of the Police Chief, identified two new search tools that can identify the principle operators of properties owned by corporations and can identify the residents of City rentals.

9. Council Staff researched and drafted ordinances. The most prominent are:

- Certificate of Transfer
- Rental Housing
- Defining regulations regarding the opening of new bank accounts and investment accounts
- Zoning to address the backlog of applications and function of the Zoning Administrator

- CORE Program
- Referendum question regarding the qualifications for the City's elected Auditor

Council Staff also assisted the Administration with researching and amending various ordinances.

10. In addition to drafting legislation and organizing a wide variety of meetings, Council Staff composed **43 commendations** and recognition certificates. Council commendations have been issued to recognize the many achievements and heritage of local individuals and organizations. In addition, certificates for athletic and academic accomplishments were issued to those named in the Reading Eagle Berks Best for Reading High School, Holy Name High School and Central Catholic High School. Recognition certificates or proclamations were also issued to four (4) city businesses.

11. Council Staff further refined the process for managing **appointments to City Boards, Authorities and Commissions**. A system of improved background checks was implemented. These checks enable staff to determine if an applicant is in good standing in the community. The background check determines if a candidate has unpaid parking tickets, warrants, delinquent taxes, issues with the Water Authority, Solid Waste Office and Codes Office. **A total of 72 applications were processed resulting in 57 approvals.** Twenty applicants were identified to have problems during their background checks. Of those twenty, 3 have not rectified the issues. In addition, three applications were received from non-City residents.

12. Council Staff updated the **Council Policy and Procedure Handbook** and drafted applicable amendments that were approved by City Council. One proposed amendment to define policy regarding abstentions was enacted.

The office will continue to work to revise existing policies and identify areas where clarification or new policy is needed. Staff understands that the evolving nature of government requires astute observation and constant vigilance to keep Council organized and functioning well.

13. Council Staff participated in the bi-monthly meetings with the City's **Act 47** Coordinators regarding the Recovery Plan initiatives.

14. During 2010 the City installed the **Granicus webcasting system in Council Chambers**. Due to the reduction in BCTV funding, BCTV now tapes and records Monday Council sessions only. They no longer tape and broadcast Planning, HARB and Zoning Hearing Board meetings. The webcasting system changes that and makes the meetings, press conferences, etc. available to all residents in Reading, Berks County and across the nation through the City's website. Currently City Council, the BRPC and the Zoning Hearing Board are the only groups to stream meetings to the City's website. With the Administration's approval, the system will be installed in the Penn Room in 2012, which will enable further expansion of the webcasting system. The meetings and functions streamed are archived on the City's website so people can watch any meeting or event recorded which greatly expands the City's transparency. Council Staff has also encouraged the Administration to use the non-public webcasting system for employee orientation and training, as employees will have the ability to review training programs recorded for internal use at their work stations, which makes the training efficient and affordable.
15. Beginning in March 2011, City Council moved to a **paperless agenda system** to save money on supplies and labor. The City's IT Department purchased I Pads that will be shared by all City Boards, Authorities and Commissions.

Administrative Accomplishments

The Council Office is a fully functioning municipal office, which has many responsibilities in addition to providing support to City Council. The head of the office, the City Clerk, is the official keeper of record. As such the City Clerk is responsible for the maintenance of all **municipal records**, their dissemination to relevant and interested parties and attesting to their authenticity. This important responsibility necessitates a large and complex system of document management and storage. Four particular areas were addressed by staff in 2011:

1. Binding of the Journal of Council, Ordinances, and Resolutions;
2. Organizing the vault, which serves as the City's records repository;
3. Utilizing technology acquired in 2007 to scan items of historical and administrative value into a computer database;
4. Coordinating the Municipal Records Retention Program with all Administrative Offices.

Journals of Council are prepared by the office annually. The Journal contains the Council minutes, ordinances, resolutions, reports, support documentation and the budgets (CDBG, General Fund and CIP). Copies of the Journal are required to be sent to the Berks County Law Library and the Reading Public Library, as well as

being kept on record in the office. In 2011, Journals of Council were prepared for the year 2010. In 2011 Staff will continue to aggressively pursue document management by utilizing the 2010 upgrade to the DocStar software. A primary goal for 2010 is imaging the bound journals of Council from 1985 to 1853. This project will take longer but staff projects the ability to image between seven and nine books per year. Having all documents stored electronically will greatly increase our ability to research issues. The Council Office is the only City office currently using this technology.

Vault organization remained a priority in 2011. Lawsuits, minutes for Boards, Authorities and Commissions, Council minutes, Ordinances and Resolutions and ongoing/current issue files were all given a specific section of the vault. While reorganizing, many duplicated and dated documents were disposed of or turned over to the Berks County Historical Society. This reorganization freed up much needed space and improved the ease of accessing documents in the vault. Finally Resolutions, Ordinances and minutes back to 1988 were scanned, inventoried and stored. The digitizing of documents has greatly improved accessibility and the ability to research City documents.

The **Codified Ordinances** are updated annually, but a re-codification of the book has become necessary. Staff is working to procure a firm to re-codify and republish the City's ordinances in 2012 which will include all legislation enacted in 2011. During the re-codification process Council Staff and the Law Office will work with a publishing firm to review all enacted ordinances, review the organization of the Codified Ordinance book and make adjustments that will improve the book. Before the 2001 re-codification every City Office was provided with a hard copy of the Codified Ordinance Book which quickly became problematic as offices did not update the book when new materials were provided by the Council Office. The 2001 re-codification reduced the number of hard copy provided to various offices and began to force offices to use the online version of the book. With the 2012 re-codification, all City Offices will be required to use only the online version. In 2011, Council Staff worked with the City's Webmaster to provide live updates to the online Codified Ordinance book as ordinances are enacted by City Council. For the last five (5) years, Council staff has been **posting newly enacted legislation on the City's website** which provides instant access to new legislation for employees and citizens and has reduced the cost of the annual supplement of the Codified Ordinance book.

Constituent Service

Council staff recognizes that we serve as your fulltime support service and are a reflection of Council. As such we make every effort to conduct business in a courteous and professional manner. The opening of the Call Center – and now the Citizens Services Center - has not reduced the number of calls our office receives. Calls are tracked and managed according to category. The largest category, Calls for Service includes: directory assistance, departmental transfers and general questions about City operations.

In 2010, at the request of the Administration, complaints and other service requests were forwarded to the Managing Director's office to be forwarded to the Call Center/Citizens Services Center who forwards the complaint to a City department for resolution; however, Staff monitors issues and works with the Managing Director's office to try to ensure prompt resolution. Complaints received by the Council office fall into two major categories; those who call this office because they have had a successful experience in the past and those who call this office after calling other City offices and received no response.

This process continued in 2011. When complaints are received, they are recorded in a separate database, which staff regularly monitors. The database tracks the complaint by type showing when the complaint was recorded, where the complaint was sent to for further action and what action was taken regarding the complaint.

Council staff generates requests for updates monthly. Forwarding complaints to the Managing Director has not improved follow up or resolution during 2010. It is the goal of the Council office to have 100% complaint resolution. The complaint resolution **rate for 2011 is 70%**. The resolution rate **is comparable to the resolution rate of the Call Center in 2008 (70%)** but is still **down from 2006 (94%) when Council staff directly handled all complaints**.

The following tables show a tabulation of the number and type of issues addressed by the Council Office in 2011:

Breakdown of 2011 Calls by Type

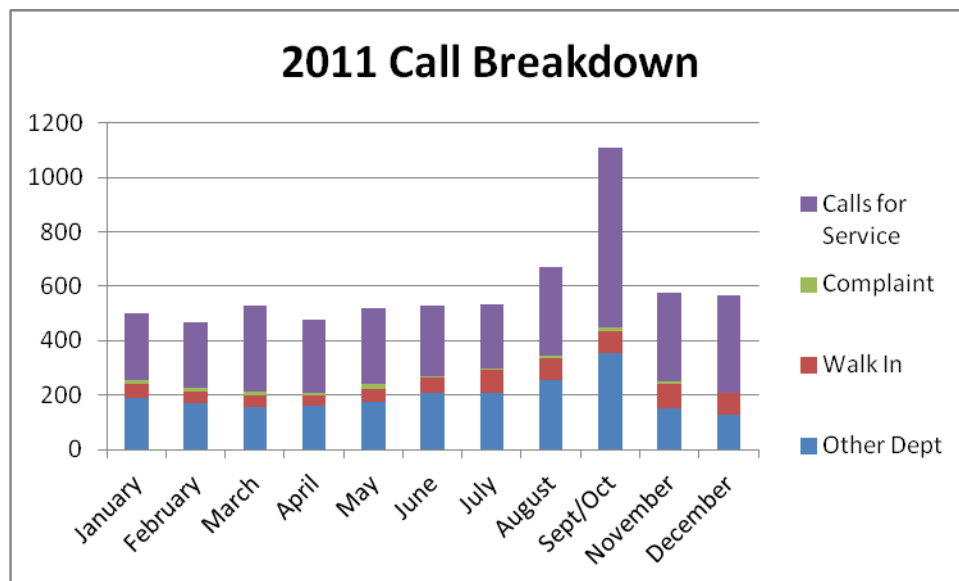
<u>Other Department</u>	<u>Walk- Ins*</u>	<u>Complaints</u>	<u>Calls for Service</u>	<u>Total Calls</u>
2,151	714	115	3,368	6,348

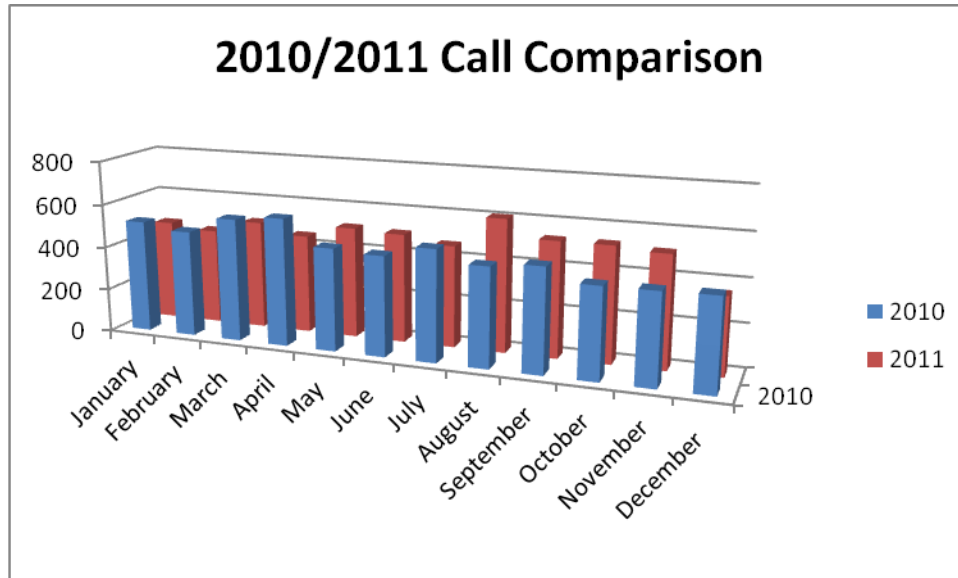
*Walk-Ins are counted as calls as the service provided is the same.

Breakdown of 2010 Calls by Type

<u>Other Department</u>	<u>Walk- Ins*</u>	<u>Complaints</u>	<u>Calls for Service</u>	<u>Total Calls</u>
1,750	599	98	3,126	5,573

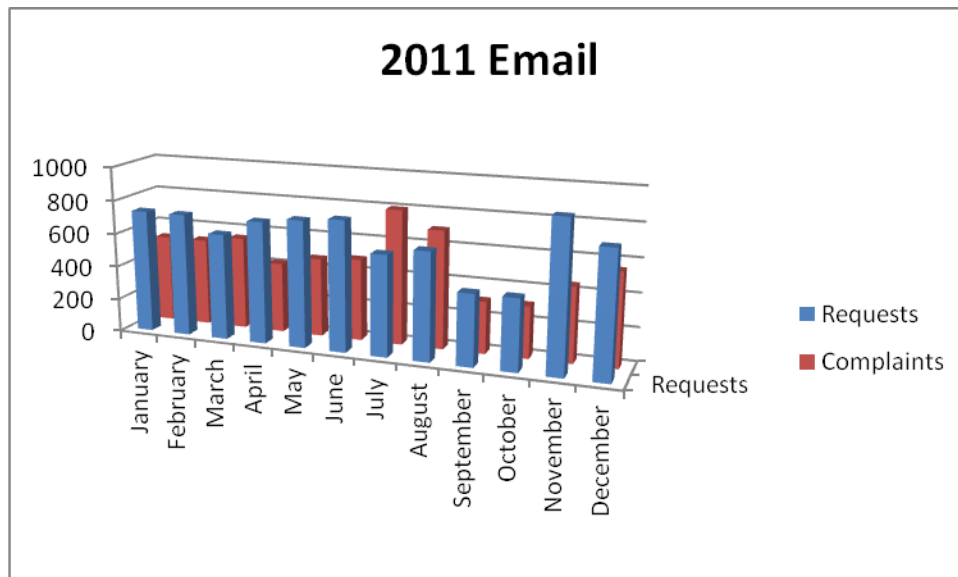
*Walk-Ins are counted as calls as the service provided is the same.



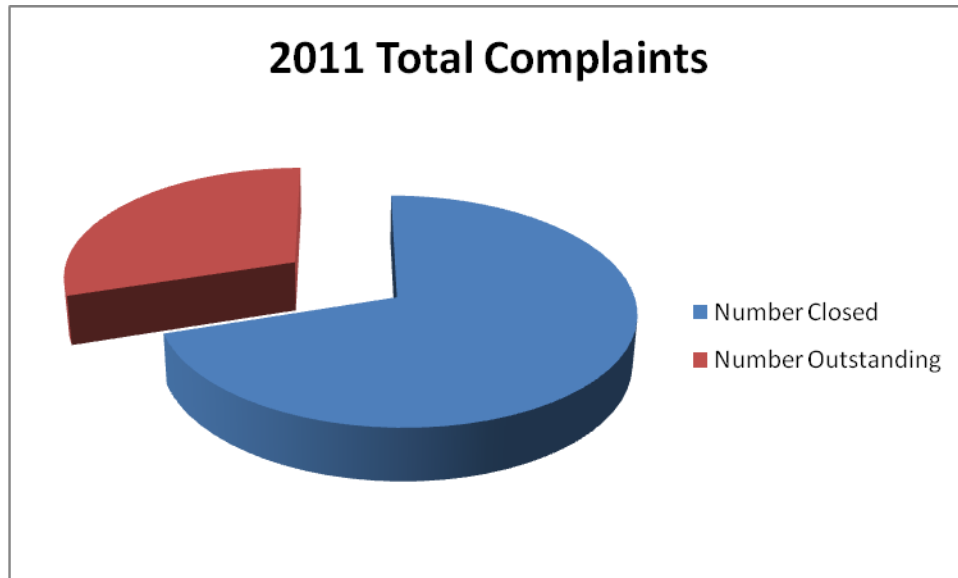


Email Management

With the increased use of email by citizens of the City, the office has begun tracking the number of requests and complaints received by email. The following chart outlines the number of requests and complaints received during 2011.



Complaint Management



Staff acknowledges that the job of supporting Council is never finished. There are always ways of improving existing functions and finding new techniques to carry out existing tasks. As part of setting goals, staff continually evaluates the function and efficiency of the legislative branch of government, determining what should continue, what should be improved and what can be dispensed with. The consistent critical self-evaluation undertaken by staff not only benefits the office organization but Council as well. The quality of support improves as inefficient methods are weeded out. By setting clear goals for the upcoming year, staff will orient tasks to achieve those goals.

Staff Goals for 2012:

1. Train additional personnel on the use of the newly installed webcasting equipment in Council Chambers - HARB and Planning
2. Organize Town meetings as requested by members of Council;
3. Continue digital imaging and maintenance of ordinances and resolutions, meeting minutes and contracts (with an emphasis on contracts to allow for better search ability and to dispose contracts in accordance with the PA Record Retention Schedule in order to free up much needed space in the vault) and use the new version of DocStar to increase the availability of electronic documents to all City Departments and the public; Work with the Reading Public Library to find off-site storage space for permanent

records;

4. Continue to work closely with the Administration and Business Analyst to improve efficiency of operations to residents;

5. Work with IT to improve updates to the on-line version of the Codified Ordinance Book, updating of the Council webpages and provide space for an “In Your District Update” area;

6. Provide opportunities for staff and City Council to receive training and education by attending conferences, workshops and other training opportunities;

7. Work with Administration on amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance along with the creation of the first Official Map;

8. Continue to coordinate meetings with the School Board, County Commissioners and Albright Administration;

9. Continue to search for non-owner occupied properties to ensure they obtain all the necessary licenses/permits necessary;

10. Monitor and attend Magisterial District Justice hearings for problem property/property owners;

11. Improve various application forms used in the Council Office;

12. Re-codify the City’s Ordinance Books;

13. Bi-monthly newsletters to City staff highlighting and describing legislation recently enacted by City Council;

14. Develop a means to track follow up items requested by Council;

15. Combine the monthly Council Staff report with a Council Activity Report.